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Marjorie F. Ragona

THE HOMOSEXUAL CHRISTIAN: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AS ACCEPTANCE

For the purposes of this paper, a parallel will be drawn between the early church councils (particularly that at Jerusalem), the quarrel between the Judaizers (the circumcision party), and Paul's doctrine of justification by faith as it affects the Gentile Christian's need to be circumcised as a necessity of faith and the application of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches to the National Council of Churches, the membership of that church being primarily homosexual Christians, and the justification by faith of those members. The parallel will seek to show that if Paul could apply justification by faith in the case of circumcision, it is equally applicable in the case of homosexuals who admit to Christianity.

In 1983, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), a denomination founded in 1968 by a Pentecostal minister, Rev. Troy Perry, applied for admission to the National Council of Churches (NCC), provoking arguments on both sides of the question by theologians, psychologists, and church and Council executives. The question was not new, but the application for full membership was. UFMCC had, almost from its beginning, held associate status in the NCC. What it was asking, in 1983, was that its members be considered Christians equally with such denominations as Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, American Baptists, and Presbyterians.

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and the basic question of whether the UFMCC qualified as a church. In an article in the UFMCC magazine JOURNEY,¹ three views were presented. One positive view by Jane Cary Peck, assistant professor of religion and society at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, Massachusetts, a negative view by William P. Wilson, chief of the Division of Biological Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center at Durham, North Carolina, and an informational view from the NCC by Jean Caffey Lyles, a Council executive. Using outdated and much discredited psychological writings (like those of ~~C.W.~~ Socarides and Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse) on homosexuality, along with very fundamentalist works like ~~C.W.~~ Kenyon's What You Should Know About Homosexuality (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979), Wilson argued that homosexuality is a sin and condemned by God, that homosexuality does not lead to God's goals for human sexuality and, therefore, does not fulfill God's sacramental purpose; that 60% of the American Psychiatric Association believed homosexuality to be a pathological variation immediately before they voted to remove it from their classification of mental diseases; that gay Christians erroneously interpret scripture - citing that the only interpretation for him is a literal one; that gays seduce youths stating that "1/3 of all homosexual men will have a sexual encounter with those under the age of 15; that gay sexual practices are "disgusting and perverse," that Lesbian's lifestyle gives rise to "conflict and aberrant behavior" and concluding that no, the UFMCC should not be allowed membership in the NCC because "condemnation came from God, who has spoken God's word against it and has never stuttered in God's speech. If we do not listen to God, then we are responsible for the consequences of our behavior."

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the NCC constitution and bylaws, based on the UFMCC's standard of trinitarian faith and on its being an organized communion of national scope with a membership of 20,000 members and 50 local churches (27,000 members and 200+ local churches), that the liturgy, worship, polity and doctrine all fall within the Christian mainstream; that nowhere in its Bylaws is homosexuality mentioned and that membership is open to all baptized Christians through a letter of transfer or through affirmation of faith. Peck quotes Betty Fairchild of Parents and Friends of Gays who states that gay church members come from somewhere -- "They come from all our churches, yours and mine. And yet these men and women do not seek out gay churches simply because they want to worship with other gays. They have, in fact, found themselves driven away -- openly or subtly -- from their own particular churches," and sets forth the parallel between UFMCC and the Black denominations. She concludes, "Through dialogue, grounded in openness to God's grace and the possibility for God's ongoing revelation and relying on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we may strengthen our unity and deepen our understanding of God's way."

→ The NCC position was that to allow UFMCC membership would create havoc within the membership communions and cause many, particularly the Eastern Orthodox, the American Baptists, and the Reformed Church in America to leave the Council, that it would erode the financial base of the NCC, and furthermore there was the question of whether UFMCC was indeed a church or a single-issue group with too narrow a base of existence, and furthermore, there was the possibility that its teachings on sexuality were heretical.

The question this writer asks is what belief or beliefs make one a Christian? If this writer reads Paul aright, there is only one base, sola fide, the acceptance of justification by grace through faith; accepting God's provision of

Jesus Christ as mediator and sacrifice, all persons are justified by their faith.

- Just as the noncircumcised were accepted into the church without other conditions hindering them, homosexuals who accept Jesus as Lord, Christ as their savior and are willing to live out their faith in the light of oppression, then they, too, by Paul's terminology at least, are fully Christians.
- The presence of thlipsis, "affliction" in the life of the gay Christian connects that Christian with the sufferings of Christ. Paul says to the Thessalonians, "You received the word in much affliction..." (I Thess. 1:6) and goes on to say "Therefore, we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring." To be and remain a Christian in the gay community does not increase one's status or community affiliation as it may do for the non-gay. To present oneself as a Christian in a community which sees the church as the prime oppressor is to find exactly how faithful one is to Christ. W.A. Meeks, in "The First Urban Christians" reminds us that Paul connects the hostility that the converts have experienced from some of their neighbors with a very broad pattern: the apostle's own sufferings, the sufferings of Christians in other places, the sufferings of Christ, and that Paul had warned them to expect such affliction. Their affliction now confirms the validity of that teaching, including crucifixion-and-resurrection, as a root metaphor for seeing the world.² For the gay Christian coming out (using one's faith as the prime mover in one's ability to be honest with family, friends and the world) with the attendant hostile reception by many but also with its liberation and ability to renew one's life, is often seen in the light of the crucifixion-and-resurrection metaphor. It places one alongside the Christ and helps one to truly understand

what it is to be rejected and yet restored.

The second thought which in Paul's theology applies to the gay Christian is anakainosis, renewal. One form of renewal tells us that "We who were once no people are now God's people." () Paul says, in Galatians, "When, however, the fullness of the time had come, God sent his son, born by woman, put under Law, in order that he might redeem those who are under Law, in order that we might receive the adoption as sons. And since you are sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying out 'Abba! Father!' Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son also an heir through God." Werner Georg Kummel, in The Theology of the New Testament points out that in Christ's death and resurrection, eschatological salvation was wrought, and with the in-breaking of the coming age into this world, through Christ's death and resurrection, the law is deprived of the power to enslave men and to impose a curse upon them. The curse of the law is taken away by Christ's vicarious dying and his resurrection. But also, it is shown that the actual state of being lost, which affects the one who is enslaved under the law, is the curse of the law, and the freedom from this curse, brought about by Christ, is by its very nature freedom from the guilt which is pronounced by this curse.³ The gay person has been enslaved under the law (Leviticus 20:13) and that enslavement has been a curse; Christ frees us from the law and from the attendant guilt -- or does he? The question here is who is freed from what law? Does Christ free us from all the law, or only from the law pertaining to circumcision and if we are still faced with selective enforcement of the law, what parts? In other words, what is Paul saying? Are we free from the law or are we not?

George T. Montague, in "Paul's Teaching on Being and Becoming in Christ," states that for Paul, there is no doubt that the Christian has entered a new existence.

The Christian life is defined as existing in Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:30). The stress in this passage is not a moral demand but on the sheer fact of existing, of having being. In Galatians 6:15, Paul explicitly rejects reliance on anything short of an absolute beginning in the Christian life: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any account, but only a new creation." Quite simply, the new life is so new and profound that it can be compared only to the act of creation.⁴ Can we say of the gay Christian then that "neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality is of any account, but only that we have been created Christians in Jesus Christ"? (See Ephesians 4:24.)

Gal. 6:15 would be more to the point

Eleutheria. If we are "new creatures in Christ" then as Paul says, "Christ has set us free for freedom." He goes on to speak to the Gentiles, "Stand firm, therefore, and do not get yourself loaded with a yoke of slavery again. Look, I, Paul, tell you if you become circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you." This warning from the paranetical section of Galatians, Hans Dieter Betz, points out, is placed at the beginning of the section on ethical exhortation and thus in the center of the argument. "The centrality of the notion of freedom became clear already in the narratio section, when the apostle claimed that the sole purpose of his struggles was the preservation of Christian freedom...As a result, eleutheria (freedom) is the central theological concept which sums up the Christian's situation before God, as well as in this world."⁵ If Paul could speak to the individual gay Christian, might he not say, "Look, if you become straight -- and that is how you think you are going to go to heaven -- you are loading yourself with the yoke of slavery again." Betz goes on, "The freedom which the Christian is granted is based upon God's redemption in Christ. However, freedom is not merely a theory but an experience of that freedom. It was the gift of the Spirit, which enabled the Galatians, as all (emphasis mine)

Christians to experience freedom. This experience amounted to a liberation from the 'elements of the world' and their tyrannical regime of evil and included the liberation from slavery under the Law and sin, from death, from ignorance of God, from superstition, and from social oppression and religious/cultural discrimination. When Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit, freedom is conspicuously absent from the list of the benefits of the spirit. The reason is that freedom is both the basis of them all and the result of them all. In fact, II Cor. 3: 17 suggests that for Paul Spirit and freedom are one and the same thing: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.'"⁶ To continue with Betz' line of thought, the opposite of freedom is not bondage, but suppression. He says that the loss of salvation in Christ is a return under the yoke of slavery, recalling the imagery of cruel subjection of slaves under their masters, and the heavy burden of suppression which the enslaved have to bear (and which, of course, the masters do not).⁷ For the gay Christian, this becomes a battle with the heterosexual as master, defining what is appropriate sexuality for all people, and the burden of suppression of what is natural for the gay. If I am free in Christ, I can be whom I am created to be, so long as I live out my freedom in obedience -- i.e. live out my gayness responsibly (in response to what Christ has already done for me).

Betz' insights are valuable: "Paul leaves no doubt about the Christian consequences of the move the Galatians are presently considering. Speaking in terms of Pauline theology, they are seeking 'justification by Law'. This means they have 'dropped out of grace' and this again means they 'have become estranged from Christ.'⁸ If faith has become the decisive basis of salvation, the Jewish cultic symbols and their implications must become a matter of irrelevance. The symbol of circumcision (or its absence) no longer has any power...what matters

to those 'in Christ Jesus' is 'faith working through love.' In Paul's view, the Christian is not merely an individual who believes in Jesus Christ but by being such a believer he becomes a channel for the divine power of agape (love)... Nothing but this love is the basis of the Christian eschatological hope.⁹ For the gay Christian, it is not the type of sexuality which matters to salvation, but the cross and the act on the cross done in love which makes the observation of the Torah invalid and the believer in that act a participant in grace.

Cousar then picks up the argument. "Theologically, the fault with the Galatian heresy and any other expression of legalism is what it assumes, whether stated or not (and of course, usually not) about the meaning of the death of Christ. Is he adequate to cure the paralysis resulting from human sins or is he not? Does he liberate from the domination of evil or does he not? Is the death of this one man really the means for dealing with the network of broken relationships and the reoccurring cycle of destructive behavior which for so long has been a part of the human condition."¹⁰ It is no wonder that Paul leaves out his thanksgiving for the Galatians -- Paul says, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ." But a perversion of the truth, never leaves anyone reason to be thankful.¹¹ If my way to heaven is to become straight, what then of the cross? And if not the cross, for what have I to be thankful -- certainly not for heterosexuality. Cousar says that the fundamental nature of the gospel is grace. "If there is a test to be applied to preaching, it is this: Does it declare Jesus Christ as the unqualified liberator -- from religious legalism or secular cynicism, from paralyzing apathy or frantic anxiety, from being oppressed or being the oppressor, from cowardly fear or brash self-reliance? Does this preaching clarify what Christ has freed us for?"¹²

Robin Scroggs tells us that what Paul has set us free for is a life under grace -- but solely under grace. "And yet it seems to be that very act of grace which poses the threat! ...Thus Paul's theology of justification by grace is so radical as to be ultimately liberating, ultimately offensive, and ultimately threatening: Liberating because we are free from the world; offensive because the moral standards so important to the world are torn down -- is not this anarchy in the Godhead itself?; and threatening because it seems to threaten death, rather than to offer life. Most people clearly are not willing to take such a big risk; they prefer to continue to clutch at their achievements. But Paul, at least, is clear about the matter. To continue to clutch, even at moral virtue, is sin."¹³ Scroggs goes further, "disobedience is the refusal to accept justification by grace through faith. Thus disobedience applies to the righteous Pharisee as he strives for perfect fulfillment of the Torah." Scroggs turns this to say that "we are freed from the tyranny of someone else's claim about what is true and what is morally correct behavior. We are freed from the claim that some set of rules and regulations is ontologically true and eternally binding. We are even freed from the fear of going to hell unless we can subscribe to a given set of theological dogmas." ¹⁴

If the foregoing interpretations of Paul's theology of justification by grace through faith are indeed the interpretations of those now working in the fields of doctrine, scripture, and ethics, what then of the desire of gay Christians to be indeed part of the "body of Christ."

James Nelson, professor of Christian Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, says "the church must face the issue of homosexuality more openly, honestly and sensitively than it has before:

(1) Homosexual Christians are sisters and brothers of all other Christians, earnestly seeking the church's full acceptance without prejudgment on the basis of a sexual orientation regarding which they had no basic choice.

(2) While antihomosexual bias has existed in Western culture generally, the church must take responsibility for its share in shaping, supporting, and transmitting negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

(3) The Christian mandate for social justice will not let us forget that discrimination continues today against millions of gay persons in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and in the enjoyment of fundamental civil liberties.

(4) The Church is called to do its ongoing theological and ethical work as responsibly as possible. Fresh insight from feminist theologians, gay Christians and those secular scholars who frequently manifest God's 'common grace' in the world remind us of the numerous ways in which our particular sexual conditionings color our perceptions of God's nature and presence among us. If the Protestant Principle warns us against absolutizing historically relative theological judgments, so also our openness to continuing revelation should convince us, with some of our ancestors in faith that "The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth."¹⁵

Gunther Bornkamm quotes the Qumran Manual of Discipline: "Though I stumble by reason of the wickedness of my flesh, through God's righteousness my justification remains forever." Bornkamm goes on, "God does not leave men to themselves. God accepts the godless. Thus, he does not seclude himself in his righteousness, but includes the sinner in it and brings him from afar near to himself. God both pronounces and performs this justification for the sinner."¹⁶ Despite Paul's pronouncements in Romans 1 and I Corinthians 10, I fully believe that Paul would have accepted the gay Christian as a member of the body of Christ and would have voted for inclusion of UFMCC into the National Council of Churches using the same theological base which he used to declare the Gentile Christians freed from the demands of the Law and justified by grace through their faith. It cannot be both ways or one way for some Christians and another way for others. Paul was wise enough to see the threat to the faith, he would indeed see it today.

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Betz' insights are valuable: "Paul leaves no doubt about the Christian consequences of the move the Galatians are presently considering. Speaking in terms of Pauline theology, they are seeking 'justification by Law'. This means they have 'dropped out of grace' and this again means they 'have become estranged from Christ.'⁸ If faith has become the decisive basis of salvation, the Jewish cultic symbols and their implications must become a matter of irrelevance. The symbol of circumcision (or its absence) no longer has any power...what matters

to those 'in Christ Jesus' is 'faith working through love.' In Paul's view, the Christian is not merely an individual who believes in Jesus Christ but by being such a believer he becomes a channel for the divine power of agape (love)... Nothing but this love is the basis of the Christian eschatological hope.⁹ For the gay Christian, it is not the type of sexuality which matters to salvation, but the cross and the act on the cross done in love which makes the observation of the Torah invalid and the believer in that act a participant in grace.

Cousar then picks up the argument. "Theologically, the fault with the Galatian heresy and any other expression of legalism is what it assumes, whether stated or not (and of course, usually not) about the meaning of the death of Christ. Is he adequate to cure the paralysis resulting from human sins or is he not? Does he liberate from the domination of evil or does he not? Is the death of this one man really the means for dealing with the network of broken relationships and the reoccurring cycle of destructive behavior which for so long has been a part of the human condition."¹⁰ It is no wonder that Paul leaves out his thanksgiving for the Galatians -- Paul says, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ." But a perversion of the truth, never leaves anyone reason to be thankful.¹¹ If my way to heaven is to become straight, what then of the cross? And if not the cross, for what have I to be thankful -- certainly not for heterosexuality. Cousar says that the fundamental nature of the gospel is grace. "If there is a test to be applied to preaching, it is this: Does it declare Jesus Christ as the unqualified liberator -- from religious legalism or secular cynicism, from paralyzing apathy or frantic anxiety, from being oppressed or being the oppressor, from cowardly fear or brash self-reliance? Does this preaching clarify what Christ has freed us for?"¹²

Robin Scroggs tells us that what Paul has set us free for is a life under grace -- but solely under grace. "And yet it seems to be that very act of grace which poses the threat! ...Thus Paul's theology of justification by grace is so radical as to be ultimately liberating, ultimately offensive, and ultimately threatening: Liberating because we are free from the world; offensive because the moral standards so important to the world are torn down -- is not this anarchy in the Godhead itself?; and threatening because it seems to threaten death, rather than to offer life. Most people clearly are not willing to take such a big risk; they prefer to continue to clutch at their achievements. But Paul, at least, is clear about the matter. To continue to clutch, even at moral virtue, is sin."¹³ Scroggs goes further, "disobedience is the refusal to accept justification by grace through faith. Thus disobedience applies to the righteous pharisee as he strives for perfect fulfillment of the Torah." Scroggs turns this to say that "we are freed from the tyranny of someone else's claim about what is true and what is morally correct behavior. We are freed from the claim that some set of rules and regulations is ontologically true and eternally binding. We are even freed from the fear of going to hell unless we can subscribe to a given set of theological dogmas." ¹⁴

If the foregoing interpretations of Paul's theology of justification by grace through faith are indeed the interpretations of those now working in the fields of doctrine, scripture, and ethics, what then of the desire of gay Christians to be indeed part of the "body of Christ."

James Nelson, professor of Christian Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, says "the church must face the issue of homosexuality more openly, honestly and sensitively than it has before:

(1) Homosexual Christians are sisters and brothers of all other Christians, earnestly seeking the church's full acceptance without prejudgment on the basis of a sexual orientation regarding which they had no basic choice.

(2) While antihomosexual bias has existed in Western culture generally, the church must take responsibility for its share in shaping, supporting, and transmitting negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

(3) The Christian mandate for social justice will not let us forget that discrimination continues today against millions of gay persons in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and in the enjoyment of fundamental civil liberties.

(4) The Church is called to do its ongoing theological and ethical work as responsibly as possible. Fresh insight from feminist theologians, gay Christians and those secular scholars who frequently manifest God's 'common grace' in the world remind us of the numerous ways in which our particular sexual conditionings color our perceptions of God's nature and presence among us. If the Protestant Principle warns us against absolutizing historically relative theological judgments, so also our openness to continuing revelation should convince us, with some of our ancestors in faith that "The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth."¹⁵

Gunther Bornkamm quotes the Qumran Manual of Discipline: "Though I stumble by reason of the wickedness of my flesh, through God's righteousness my justification remains forever." Bornkamm goes on, "God does not leave men to themselves. God accepts the godless. Thus, he does not seclude himself in his righteousness, but includes the sinner in it and brings him from afar near to himself. God both pronounces and performs this justification for the sinner."¹⁶ Despite Paul's pronouncements in Romans 1 and I Corinthians , I fully believe that Paul would have accepted the gay Christian as a member of the body of Christ and would have voted for inclusion of UFMCC into the National Council of Churches using the same theological base which he used to declare the Gentile Christians freed from the demands of the Law and justified by grace through their faith. It cannot be both ways or one way for some Christians and another way for others. Paul was wise enough to see the threat to the faith, he would indeed see it today.

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*I had wanted to revise this
but didn't get a chance*

June 12, 1986

Marge, Christ's peace.

I figured this way would provide the chance to better respond to your paper than trying to squeeze things in the margins. As I suspect you know, your paper raises a number of issues many of which cannot be conveniently handled in this context. Still, I wanted to give you some response. You may or may not find it helpful.

I propose to stick to strictly ~~theological~~ and Pauline issues. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the politics of the WCC, things psychological and the like. This means I have nothing to say about the first three pages of your paper. Except for providing a broad context for your paper they could have been dropped, especially since they confuse the focus of the paper.

Thought
From your starting point, and your ending I would gather that the principle focus of the paper is to provide Pauline input on the question of the inclusion of the UFMCC into full membership in the WCC. In between ^{however} there seems to be another agenda operative, specifically a defense of homosexual behavior. I say seems to be because you never really clarify what you are talking about. On your last paper I suggested that the distinction between orientation and behavior was important in assessing Paul's position on homosexuality. Paul might come up with two very different answers to your allusion to Gal. 6:15 on p. 6. "Neither heterosexual orientation nor homosexual orientation is of any account, but a new creation." I think he would accept that. Likewise, and you allude to this further along on p. 6, he may paraphrase I Cor. 7:17ff "Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. Was any one at the time of his call heterosexually oriented? Let him be content with his wife. Was any one at the time of his call homosexually oriented? Let him not seek a wife, as if "going straight" were a requirement for salvation." The paraphrase could take several forms. The point is that there are a number of statements in Paul of this sort which allow for a wide degree of generality with regard to conditions of life.

This would be an adaptation of Paul to the modern situation. In point of fact Paul knows no thing of orientations

The question is whether Paul would apply these formulaic statements to the varieties of different behavior? The existence of lists such as Gal. 5:19-23 indicates that he would not - "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity ... I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Now such persons may indeed be members of the body of Christ. Paul certainly had his candidates among the Corinthian community for those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 5:1-5).

This is what is not clear from your paper. Is the issue of the inclusion of the UFMCC in the WCC a problem because the UFMCC

attracts those of homosexual orientation or because the UFMCC in fact (whether or not it has anything in the bylaws - that is a political issue not a theological one) attempts to reconcile homosexual behavior with Christian life? If the former then it would seem to me that the UFMCC is on very firm Pauline grounds. No prior condition hinders access to Christ of itself. I get the impression, however, that it is the latter that is at issue. Your citation of Lev. 20:13 as an example of a law that the Christian is free from, in that it describes a specific behavior, suggests this as well as your comment on p. 7 - "a battle with the heterosexual as master, defining what is appropriate sexuality for all people, and the burden of suppression of what is natural for the gay." Keeping the issue vague may be strategically useful but it also leads to confused argumentation that does not finally convince anyone and serves rather to obscure the truth.

With these comments as preface let me now comment page by page on your paper.

pp. 2-3 "Sola fide" has a complicated polemical history. The recent Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on this issue might be useful in terms of what one could count on to be generally accepted. The question that can be immediately asked is - "Does that mean that it does not matter what you do as long as you believe in Jesus?" Luther was not particularly fond of James 2:18 but he more or less conceded the point. The natural dynamic of faith is to open up to the works of love. Christian faith cannot be treated in isolation from Christian life and behavior. "By faith alone?" Surely. But those who do the works of the flesh "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

p. 4 The appeal to the experience of suffering is fraught with difficulty. In Paul it refers primarily to that eschatological suffering associated with the spread of the gospel or, more broadly, with living out the gospel. Not all persecution fits this mold. Communists are somewhat harassed in this country. It would be stretching it to say this connects them with the sufferings of Christ except in the broad sense that Christ identifies himself with all human suffering (which is not what Paul is on about). Another example would be if I should acknowledge my passion for video

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Of what sort of affliction is the hostility encountered on coming out? This is a question you need to explore. In what sense is it connected with the gospel, specifically the death and resurrection of the Lord? The experience of tension, suffering, agony,

release of tension, relief while it mirrors the phenomenology of Christ's death and resurrection of itself has nothing to do with the gospel. It seems to me that there are certain ways you can proceed. If the concrete demands of Christian life in this concrete situation requires a self-disclosure and hostility is encountered at that disclosure then one's suffering is in the image of Christ crucified. But if the concrete demands of Christian life does not demand such a disclosure then why make it? I am not a fan of bearing one's soul for the heck of it. If it serves a purpose, fine. If not, then often enough one is simply asking for trouble. Walking around with a sign that says "kick me" is not imitating Christ - Christ was not really interested in getting crucified - he hid at nights when he didn't have the crowds around to protect him! He was betrayed, his hiding place revealed. omit?

One agenda for coming out when not otherwise demanded by Christian life may be as a trade-off. The tension of concealment is itself a form of suffering. Self-disclosure in this case is prudential - some times you'll win, some times you'll lose. One's hope is that the potential hostility will not create even greater suffering than that already experienced so that one's overall level of suffering will decrease. This is not an imitation of Christ as such though the expectation that those to whom such a revelation is made will behave in a Christ-like manner and will offer compassion and understanding is certainly a reaction one expects of those who call themselves Christian. If one instead encounters unChrist-like hostility then one's suffering is in the pattern of Christ crucified.

pp. 5-9

Another agenda may be so as to be able to behave as a homosexual openly. In what way is this to be related to the gospel? One way would be as an expression of Christian freedom and I gather this is the sense that you are pursuing in these pages. Again, you do not state clearly that the issue is the freedom to openly and actively live as a homosexual (or lesbian). Orientation and behavior are not clearly distinguished in this section.

What would Paul say to this contention? There are several things to consider. First, there is Paul's understanding of the Christian's freedom from the law. You cite Lev. 20:13 on p. 5 as an example of a law that Christians are freed from. How about Ex. 20:13 - "You shall not kill" - are Christians free from that law? Of course! Does that mean that Christians are without law and may murder in full Christian freedom? No. "To those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ" (I Cor. 9:21). When one receives the Spirit one is no longer under the law, it is written on one's heart (cf. Rom. 2:15). There are certain things that one led by the Spirit will not do and murder is one of

*no the broader
the relevant question
would be "How does
Paul react when others
take 'Christian freedom'
as the basis of their actions
- cf. The Corinthians
1 Cor 6:12; 8:9; 10:23*

them. Paul has several lists of things that one led by the Spirit will not do. The Pauline principle of justification by faith remains intact. Refraining from murder will not justify a person. Faith in Christ and the reception of and walking by the promised gift of the Spirit will.

How does this apply to Lev. 20:13? For a homosexual to refrain from homosexual behavior will not justify them (nor for that matter will the heterosexual behavior of a straight save them). But would Paul's expectation be that Lev. 20:13 would be written on the heart by the Spirit? that homosexual behavior would be one of those things that one led by the Spirit would not do? Not every thing found in the Old Testament is written on the heart in this way - the law regarding circumcision, for instance or regarding various ritual observances. Of what sort of law is Lev. 20:13? There is one passage regarding freedom you do not cite - "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. Is homosexual behavior a work of the flesh? If it is, then thus sowing to the flesh will reap corruption (Gal. 6:8). This is the issue that your paper does not face and a vague appeal to Christian freedom will not serve. If the flesh is served then one is not free from the law.

This leads to the next issue. You make the point on p. 7 that "for the gay Christian, this becomes a battle with the heterosexual as master, defining what is appropriate sexuality for all people, and the burden of suppression of what is natural for the gay." The argument, in light of the above, would then have the structure: if something is natural and the Christian is free then there is nothing wrong with doing it (as long as one does so responsibly). The commentators that I have read on I Cor. 6:12-20 contend that Paul's Corinthian opponents are making a similar appeal "all things are lawful for me" being the Corinthian slogan. Paul's response is that "not all things are helpful ... I will not be enslaved by anything." Verse thirteen is likely another Corinthian slogan - "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food." The gist of the Corinthian argument would seem to be that since the sexual appetite is natural and since Christians are free there is nothing wrong with satisfying that appetite. Paul's response is that "God will destroy both one and the other." He then goes on to lay out the mutual intendedness of the Lord and the body.

It is precisely at this point that considerations such as William Wilson's on p. 2 of your paper become germane - "Wilson argued that homosexuality is a sin and condemned by God, that homosexuality does not lead to God's goals for human sexuality and, therefore, does not fulfill God's sacramental purpose." I have not read Wilson so I cannot comment on whether what he has

of. in this regard
Gen. 1 & 2. To what
extent do these chapters
of scripture authorize
set out the paradigm
of human sexuality

in a Pauline context The issue is important since
he relies so much on these chapters,

to say on these subjects is worthwhile and I can accept that many Protestants would not be interested in "sacramental purpose." Still, there are relevant issues along these lines that spell out what this mutual intendedness means and what it concretely implies.

My principal problem with your paper, then, is not with what you chose to say (though cf. the caveat on thlipsis) but rather with what you chose not to deal with. You make the case for your conclusion for the inclusion of the UFMCC adequately on p. 3 with the material from Peck (so it seems to me). But from then on there are agendas operating that are not dealt with and that in a Pauline context should be dealt with.